

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9071

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AMCONSUL LUANDA

S E C R E T LISBON 0437

EXDIS

DEPT PASS TO COMUSFORAZORES

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO

SUBJ: EMBASSY IN PRIVATE REBUTS GOP PRESS

CAMPAIGN ON AZORES.

REF: A. LISBON 173 (NOTAL) B. LISBON 400.

SUMMARY: EMBASSY THROUGH INFORMAL CONTACT HAS MADE IT CLEAR TO GOP THAT WE LOOK UPON RECENT SPATE OF PRESS ARTICLES ON AZORES AS GOP INSPIRED, AND HAVE SUGGESTED IT PREFERABLE FOR BOTH GOP AND USG THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE CONDUCTED IN PRIVATE RATHER THAN IN PUBLIC PRESS. EMBOFF ALSO STRESSED THAT LAJES BENEFITS PORTUGAL NOT JUST US AS PRESS ARTICLES INSIST. GOP OFFICIAL AGREED WITH EMBASSY VIEWS, AND STATED BOTH HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER ARE OF OPINION PRIME MINISTER HAS STIMULATED PRESS CAMPAIGN.
END SUMMARY

1. DURING PRIVATE LUNCHEON CONVERSATION BETWEEN DCM AND FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, FREITAS CRUZ, SUBJECT OF AZORES AGREEMENT WAS BROACHED. WITH REFERENCE TO RECENT SPATE OF ARTICLES IN LISBON PRESS ON SUBJECT, DCM SUGGESTED FREITAS CRUZ MUST HAVE BEEN FULLY OCCUPIED RECENTLY IN WRITING EDITORIALS. FOLLOWING CAUTIOUS DEMURRAL FROM FREITAS CRUZ DCM SAID THAT,
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SERIOUSLY, IT OBVIOUS TO EMBASSY THAT SUCH ARTICLES COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN LOCAL PRESS WITHOUT GOP APPROVAL AND, INDEED, SIMILARITY BETWEEN JANUARY 30 DIARIO DE NOTICIAS ARTICLE (REF B) AND PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT TO AMBASSADOR SCOTT

BY FOREIGN MINISTER PATRICIO (REF A) MADE IT DIFFICULT NOT TO ASSUME EDITORIAL HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY STIMULATED. DCM ADDED THAT USG FULLY AWARE THAT PORTUGUESE PUBLIC EXPECTS SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS TO COME OUT OF CURRENT AZORES NEGOTIATIONS AND OUR AWARENESS NOT ENHANCED BY PRESS ARTICLES WHICH OBVIOUSLY OFFICIALLY INSPIRED. NEITHER WOULD SUCH PRESS ARTICLES IN ANY WAY ALTER THE PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS WITH WHICH USG MUST DEAL IN ATTEMPTING BE RESPONSIVE TO GOP DESIRES. HOWEVER, SUCH PRESS EMPHASIS COULD IN FACT RAISE PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS TO EXAGGERATED LEVEL, BEYOND BOTH WHAT USG COULD PROVIDE AND WHAT GOP WOULD ITSELF FIND ACCEPTABLE, AND CONSEQUENTLY BOTH GOP AND USG WOULD BE FACED WITH PROBLEM OF BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT FROM PORTUGUESE PUBLIC. DCM CONCLUDED THAT EMBASSY HOPED GOP WOULD SEE WISDOM OF CONFINING NEGOTIATIONS TO PRIVATE SESSIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS RATHER THAN CONDUCTING NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH PUBLIC PRESS.

2. FREITAS CRUZ, WHO HAD BEEN NODDING AGREEMENT, REPLIED THAT HE HAD TAKEN VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL LINE IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PATRICIO. WERE HE ASSIGNED TO LISBON AS FOREIGN DIPLOMAT, HE WOULD NOT BE FOOLED BY PRESS EDITORIALS BUT WOULD ALSO DETECT GOVERNMENT HAND. IT WAS CLEAR TO HIM THAT US EMBASSY WAS PRIME TARGET AUDIENCE FOR ARTICLES. HE DENIED FOREIGN MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT, BUT SAID THAT, IN FACT, HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAD COME TO CONCLUSION THAT STIMULUS FOR RECENT SPATE OF EDITORIALS HAD PROBABLY COME DIRECTLY TO NEWSPAPERS FROM PRIME MINISTER. HE SAID HE WAS BOTH FRIEND AND ADMIRER OF CAETANO, BUT THAT SOMETIMES HE WAS HARD TO CONTROL. HE GUESSED THAT, IF PRIME MINISTER HAD IN FACT STIMULATED ARTICLES, IT PROBABLY WAS INSTANCE OF GUT REACTION BY PRIME MINISTER TO COMBINATION OF PRESS LEAKS IN US SOME MONTHS BACK AND DELAY IN RESPONSE FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER TO MATTERS RAISED WITH HIM DURING LISBON VISIT.

3. DCM WENT ON TO STATE THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS LINE THAT LAJES BASE BENEFITS ONLY US AND NOT PORTUGAL, GOP CAN BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS CONCERNING VALUE OF US PRESENCE AT LAJES TO PORTUGAL. ASIDE FROM ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BASE PROVIDES
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TO AZORES, GOP MUST RECOGNIZE THAT US MODERATION ON PORTUGUESE AFRICAN ISSUES, US WILLINGNESS TO STAND ALONE ON BEHALF PORTUGAL IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, TO CITE TWO EXAMPLES, CANNOT BE ENTIRELY UNRELATED TO US PRESENCE AT LAJES. LAJES IS, FURTHERMORE, SYMBOL OF AND HELPS PRESERVE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN US AND PORTUGAL, A FRIENDSHIP WHICH MUST BE OF INCREASING VALUE TO PORTUGAL AS MORE AND MORE OF ITS FORMER FRIENDS TURN LUKEWARM OR COOL. ARTICLES ALSO IMPLIED THAT ISRAELI RESUPPLY BENEFITTED ONLY US AND ISRAEL, BUT WE AWARE THAT GOP SHARES OUR VIEW OF VALUE TO ENTIRE NATO ALLIANCE, WHETHER INDIVIDUAL NATO MEMBERS WILLING TO ADMIT IT OR NOT, OF US HAVING FACED DOWN SOVIETS IN ACT OF ADVENTURISM WHICH, IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD HAVE MADE LAUGHING-STOCK OF DETENTE. FREITAS CRUZ REFRAINED FROM DIRECT COMMENT, BUT

INTERJECTED SIGNS OF AGREEMENT THROUGHOUT DCM'S PRESENTATION.

4. COMMENT: BELIEVE GOP HAS NOW BEEN ALERTED THAT WE NOT BEING
TAKEN IN BY WHAT GOP SEEMS TO HAVE DESIGNED AS CAMPAIGN
TO CONVINCE US OF WEIGHT OF PORTUGUESE "PUBLIC OPINION."
IF DEPARTMENT PERCEIVES NO OBJECTION, WE PLAN TO USE SIMILAR LINE,
OR APPROPRIATE PORTIONS THEREOF, IN OTHER CONTACTS WE HAVE
WITH PORTUGUESE.
SCOTT

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED COMUSFORAZORES.

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